

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	938
Land:	Iran
Kilde:	All Human Rights for All in Iran, Amnesty International, ARTICLE 19, AHRAZ, Association of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran-Geneva, CFPPI, Center for Human Rights in Iran, ECPM, Frontline Defenders, Hengaw Organization for Human Rights, Iran Human Rights, Justice for Iran, Kurdistan Human Rights Network, SPF, The Baloch Activists Campaign
Titel:	Iran: Authorities violating absolute prohibition of torture through harassment of witnesses involved in Iran Atrocities Tribunal
Udgivet:	7. april 2022
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	27. juni 2022

subjecting them to arbitrary arrest and detention, violence, unjust prosecution, summoning for coercive interrogations, death threats, and other forms of harassment. Such actions by state actors against the witnesses and their families are intentionally inflicted to punish them for their participation in the Tribunal and/or to stop them from publicly demanding justice. These tactics have also caused additional pain and suffering to survivors and victims' families who continue to be haunted by uncertainty and injustice. As such, these violations constitute a form of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Torture is a crime under international law that all states have the ability to investigate and prosecute under the principle of universal jurisdiction, even when not committed in their territory.

The undersigned organizations call on the international community to urge the Iranian authorities to immediately cease their reprisals against Tribunal witnesses and their families and to quash all convictions and sentences connected to their or their relatives' involvement in the Tribunal.

We further reiterate our call on the UN Human Rights Council to establish an investigative and accountability mechanism on Iran to collect, analyse and preserve evidence of the most serious crimes under international law committed in Iran to facilitate fair criminal proceedings in the future.

HARASSMENT OF TRIBUNAL WITNESSES AND THEIR FAMILIES

Since mid-November 2021, Iranian authorities, including Ministry of Intelligence agents, have subjected at least six Tribunal witnesses and/or their families to a litany of abuses, including arbitrary arrest and detention, prosecution on vaguely worded national security related charges, threatening telephone calls, summoning for coercive interrogations, and raids on their homes and places of work.

The reprisals began shortly after the first set of public hearings, which took place from 10 to 14 November 2021, and intensified following the second set of hearings held from 4 to 6 February 2022.

Due to the risk of reprisals by the Iranian authorities, 38 of the 55 witnesses who gave verbal testimony at the Tribunal during the public hearings, concealed their identities through wearing masks, sunglasses, headscarves and hats. Their fear of reprisals proved to be well founded; in at least six cases documented by the undersigned organizations, authorities targeted witnesses and/or relatives of witnesses who provided their testimonies without concealing their identities. They include one witness and his family members living in Iran, as well as the Iran-based relatives of five other witnesses, who had fled Iran following the protests and provided their testimonies from abroad.

The authorities have ordered relatives in Iran to cut ties with Tribunal witnesses based abroad and publicly denounce their testimonies or “face consequences” including detention and other harm to them and their family members, including children. They have also warned relatives in Iran that their loved ones are not safe from Iranian security forces even when they are abroad, and pressured families to reveal their locations.

In some cases, relatives have said that the targeted harassment by the authorities has caused health problems including high levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

The Iranian authorities have subjected **Amin Ansarifar**, whose son **Farzad Ansarifar** was killed by security forces on 16 November 2019 during the protests in Behbahan, Khuzestan province, and his family, to harassment since he testified at the hearings in November 2021. In the weeks following his testimony, the Ministry of Intelligence summoned Amin Ansarifar and his daughter, **Farzaneh Ansarifar**, twice for interrogations, during which the head of the Ministry of Intelligence in Behbahan questioned them on their reasons for taking part in what he referred to as the “court of the enemy” and accused Farzaneh Ansarifar of spearheading her father’s participation at the Tribunal. Amin Ansarifar was subsequently arrested on 19 February 2022 at the office of the prosecutor in Behbahan, after being summoned there for questioning into accusations of “spreading propaganda against the system” in relation to his participation at the Tribunal. The following day, on 20 February 2022, Ministry of Intelligence agents raided the family home and arrested his other son, **Arman Ansarifar**. Both men were detained in Behbahan prison without access to legal representation or family visits until their provisional release on bail on 16 March 2022, pending the completion of investigations into their cases. At the beginning of April 2022, Amin Ansarifar and Arman Ansarifar were both sentenced to three months in prison and a five-year ban on travelling abroad.

In the weeks following the arrests of Amin Ansarifar and Arman Ansarifar, the Behbahan prosecutor repeatedly warned Farzaneh Ansarifar against giving media interviews regarding their detention. On one occasion when she was summoned to the prosecutor’s office in Behbahan, three security agents harassed her for inquiring about the cases of her father and brother and violently pushed her against a wall, causing a painful shoulder injury. He warned that she would not receive any “mercy” and would be sentenced to lengthy imprisonment in two cases that the authorities have open against her for publicly calling for justice for her killed brother. On 19 February 2022, she was convicted and sentenced to four years and six months in prison in relation to a separate case stemming from her Instagram post raising awareness about her brother’s death. She has yet to be summoned to serve this sentence.

The parents of **Aram Mardoukhi**, who fled Iran after taking part in the November 2019 protests, have faced relentless harassment and intimidation by Ministry of Intelligence agents in Sanandaj, Kurdistan province. Several days after he provided his testimony at the Tribunal in November 2021, Ministry of Intelligence agents raided and searched his family’s home in Sanandaj and interrogated his mother, **Behjat Mardoukhi**, about his whereabouts and activities. The agents gave his mother an ominous warning that Aram Mardoukhi should not feel safe just because he is outside Iran and that he is still “within the grasp of the Iranian authorities”. On the same day, the agents stormed the place of work of his father, **Habibollah Mardoukhi**, and interrogated him about his son. Several days later, security forces raided his father’s place of work again, this time transferring and briefly detaining him in a building controlled by the Ministry of Intelligence.

On a separate occasion, Ministry of Intelligence agents summoned the whole family by telephone to appear for questioning at a Ministry of Intelligence building, demanding that the parents bring their 15-year-old and two-year-old sons to the interrogation. There, Aram Mardoukhi’s parents were shown videos of his testimony at the Tribunal, interrogated about their communications with him, and placed under immense pressure to publicly denounce his testimony. Agents beat Habibollah Mardoukhi on his chest and threatened him and Behjat Mardoukhi that, since they

lived in Iran, it would be detrimental for them not to “cooperate” with the authorities. They warned them that Aram Mardoukhi could face the same fate as dissident journalist Rouhollah Zam, who was abducted by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards during a visit to Iraq in October 2019 and forcibly returned to Iran where he was executed² in December 2020 following an unfair trial. This threat caused Behjat Mardoukhi severe distress and resulted in her feeling physically unwell. Agents told the family to go home and prepare for a visit by interrogators and a film crew from the state television channel, Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB),³ to conduct “interviews”. They were instructed to state on camera that their son had lied during his testimony and was paid to testify before the Tribunal, in an apparent attempt to call into question the validity of his testimony and the legitimacy of the overall proceedings, but his parents refused. On 17 February 2022, Habibollah Mardoukhi was summoned again by the Ministry of Intelligence and forced under conditions of duress to provide a statement on video. The repeated harassment, intimidation and threats by the authorities have left the whole family living in severe fear, distress and anguish over their safety in Iran and the safety of Aram Mardoukhi abroad.

Several family members of **Alireza Barekati**, who testified during the second set of hearings in February 2022 about the unlawful killing of his 21-year-old friend, **Ali Hosseini**, during the protests in Meshkindasht, Alborz province, on 16 November 2019, have also been subjected to harassment and intimidation. In the days following the testimony of Alireza Barekati, who fled Iran after the protests, individuals known to be affiliated with intelligence and security bodies sent messages to his mobile phone via messaging apps calling him a “traitor”, while others telephoned his older relatives in Iran, telling them that he is a “traitor” and demanding that they cut ties with him or face dire consequences. The intimidation and threats have left Alireza Barekati and his family in Iran in severe distress; as a result of the harassment, he has stopped contacting his family, fearing further reprisals against them.

WIDER PATTERN OF HARASSMENT OF VICTIMS’ FAMILIES

The human rights violations against those involved in the Tribunal and their families come within the context of a wider pattern of harassment and intimidation by the Iranian authorities since the November 2019 protests to stop survivors and victims’ families seeking truth and justice and/or in reprisal for their public calls for accountability.

The authorities have continued to cover up the real number of those killed during the protests, dismissed complaints by victims’ families, and praised security forces for the brutal crackdown on protests. In parallel, they have been subjecting victims’ families and others seeking justice to arbitrary arrest and detention, summons for interrogations to security and intelligence bodies, threats including of killing their surviving relatives, and other harassment, with the apparent aim of suppressing incriminating evidence and eliminating any discussion of the crimes under

² Amnesty International, “Iran: Execution of journalist Rouhollah Zam a ‘deadly blow’ to freedom of expression”, 12 December 2020, [amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/12/iran-execution-of-journalist-rouhollah-zam-a-deadly-blow-to-freedom-of-expression](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/12/iran-execution-of-journalist-rouhollah-zam-a-deadly-blow-to-freedom-of-expression)

³ The IRIB has a longstanding record of producing and broadcasting, in co-operation with Iran’s intelligence and security bodies, coerced statements from victims of human rights violations and their families and including them in propaganda videos that distort the reality of human rights violations perpetrated by the authorities or seek to justify them.

international law and other serious human rights violations perpetrated by the authorities during and after the protests.

RESTRICTIONS ON MEMORIAL CEREMONIES

The undersigned organizations found that security and intelligence forces compelled families of those killed during the November 2019 protests to sign undertakings that they would observe strict restrictions on how they commemorate their loved ones in memorial ceremonies.⁴

Over the past two years, the authorities have harassed and intimidated victim's families through threatening to harm them and their surviving children if they insist on holding memorial ceremonies and temporarily detaining them ahead of planned events. Those families who have defiantly held memorial ceremonies, including with families of other victims in attendance in solidarity, have reported the attendance of dozens of members of security forces at their gatherings, subjecting people to physical surveillance, taking pictures and filming those present, and arresting mourners and supporters.

In November 2021, **Zahra Parvini**, whose 18-year-old son **Amirhossein Zare'zadeh** was shot in the chest and killed on 16 November 2019 during the protests in Malard, Tehran province, reported during an interview⁵ with an Iranian journalist based outside Iran that around 50 security agents were present at a memorial event to mark the second anniversary of the death of another protester. She said that her family was subjected to physical surveillance on their way home. The authorities also threatened her and her family for hanging large banners with pictures of their son and other protest victims killed outside their house.

Mahboubeh Ramezani, the mother of 18-year-old **Pejman Gholipour** who died after being shot in the heart by security forces in Andisheh, Tehran province, has been repeatedly targeted for harassment and intimidation in reprisal for her public calls for justice and accountability for her son's death. On 18 November 2021, security forces arrested and temporarily detained her in relation to a commemoration event in the village of Malat, Gilan province, where her son is buried, to mark the second anniversary of his death. On the day of the memorial, security forces descended onto the village in large numbers, closed the roads in and out of the village, arrested a number of relatives and mourners and confiscated their mobile phones. Mahboubeh Ramezani and several other family members were also briefly detained.

Mahnaz Karimi, whose 30-year-old son **Vahid Damvar** was also shot dead by security forces on 17 November 2019 in Malard, Tehran province, said in a media interview⁶ that security forces were stationed in several cars outside the family home during the week prior to the second anniversary of his death in November 2021. When Mahnaz Karimi's surviving son questioned the security presence, one of the agents pulled out a gun and aimed it at him. On the day of the anniversary of her son's death, security forces filmed mourners at his grave site with the apparent aim of documenting who was in attendance. Later the same day, security forces in a number of vehicles followed the family members on their way home, stopped and searched them and temporarily confiscated their mobile phones. Mahnaz Karimi also reported that, while her family

⁴ Amnesty International, *Iran: 'They shot our children': Killings of minors in Iran's November 2019 protests* (Index Number: MDE 13/1894/2020), 4 March 2020, [amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/1894/2020/en](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde13/1894/2020/en)

⁵ Masih Alinejad, Instagram post, 18 November 2021, [instagram.com/p/CWahjkeDVXT](https://www.instagram.com/p/CWahjkeDVXT)

⁶ Masih Alinejad, Instagram post, 18 November 2021, [instagram.com/p/CWbQfEjVwj](https://www.instagram.com/p/CWbQfEjVwj)

was attending a memorial ceremony for another individual killed during the protests, security forces accessed the roof of her home via a neighbour's house and ripped down a large banner of her son that her family had hung from their roof.

Also in Malard, Revolutionary Guards agents threatened **Sedigheh Tourani**,⁷ the mother of 38-year-old **Farhad Mojaddam** who was fatally shot in the head by security forces on 16 November 2019, against holding a public memorial service in November 2021 to mark the second anniversary of her son's death. An agent from the Revolutionary Guards told her that she could only attend his grave site with her immediate family members and that a wider memorial service attended in solidarity by the mothers of other protest victims was not permitted.

RESTRICTIONS ON PEACEFUL GATHERINGS BY MOTHERS AND OTHER RELATIVES

The Iranian authorities have targeted bereaved mothers of killed protesters and bystanders who have come together to find comfort and solace and to collectively call for justice. The women, who have come to be known as Mothers for Justice, wear navy-coloured bands around their wrists as a defiant symbol of their demands for justice, hold peaceful ceremonies to mark anniversaries and otherwise gather to demand justice for the death of their children. These brave women and other bereaved relatives seeking justice are seen as a constant threat to the Iranian authorities' campaign to repress public calls for accountability and erase from public consciousness the names and faces of the hundreds of men, women and children killed during the five days of protests.

In April 2021, security forces stopped a bus full of families of protesters killed during the November 2019 and June 2009 protests who had gathered in the city of Esfahan, Esfahan province, and arrested and temporarily detained more than 20 people. The security forces refused to transfer **Sakineh Ahmadi**, the mother of 29-year-old **Ebrahim Ketabdar**, who was shot in the heart and killed on 16 November 2019 during the protests in Karaj, Alborz province, to a hospital for medical care after she lost consciousness during the incident. In November 2021, during a media interview, Sakineh Ahmadi said that there was a heavy security presence at her son's gravesite on the second anniversary of his death that same month and security forces were harassing mourners to stop crying and to leave.

On 30 July 2021, several women – mothers and wives of boys and men killed during the protests – who were peacefully protesting in Tehran's Azadi (Freedom) Square while holding pictures of their deceased loved ones were violently arrested, temporarily detained and interrogated in Vozara detention centre in Tehran.

Security forces also occasionally tear or forcibly cut the navy-blue wrist bands worn by women relatives during gatherings and/or threaten them with prosecution for wearing them. **Mahnaz Karimi** has said during a media interview⁸ that, on one occasion, a member of the security forces cut her blue wrist band and told her that it would go on her "criminal record"; when she resisted, she reported being warned that if she spoke again, he would go to her house and shoot her dead.

⁷ Masih Alinejad, Instagram post, 8 November 2021, [instagram.com/p/CWBfrGHDEMs](https://www.instagram.com/p/CWBfrGHDEMs)

⁸ Masih Alinejad, Instagram post, 18 November 2021, [instagram.com/p/CWbQfEjVwj](https://www.instagram.com/p/CWbQfEjVwj)

ARBITRARY ARREST AND DETENTION FOR SPEAKING OUT

The undersigned organizations have found that family members who defy the authorities' efforts to silence them and continue to speak out publicly, including in the media, have faced arbitrary arrest and detention, unjust prosecution, imprisonment, summons for interrogations and threatening telephone calls. Reprisal campaigns intensify in the run up to anniversaries of the November 2019 protests, with the apparent aim of suppressing any public remembrance or calls for accountability.

For more than two years, the Iranian authorities have subjected the family of 27-year-old **Pouya Bakhtiari**, who was shot in the head by security forces during the protests in Karaj, Alborz province, on 16 November 2019, to constant harassment and intimidation in reprisal for their vocal and tireless pursuit of justice. Security forces have arrested several of his relatives in a violent manner and detained them arbitrarily multiple times since November 2019. In December 2019, the state-affiliated media outlet Mehr News Agency claimed that Pouya Bakhtiar's relatives were taking part in "counterrevolutionary projects" and had been detained in order to "protect order and security" and to "prevent the continuation of the killing project and the repetition of armed actions against the general public".⁹ Pouya Bakhtiari's father, **Manouchehr Bakhtiari**, is currently imprisoned in the central prison in Karaj, Alborz province, after he was sentenced in 2021 to three years and six months in prison, two years and six months in "internal exile", and a two-year ban on leaving the country in relation to his campaigning for justice, truth and reparation for his son, including through speaking to media organizations outside Iran.

Mohsen Ghanavati, whose 25-year-old brother **Mohammad Hossein Ghanavati** was shot and killed by security forces on 16 November 2019 in Behbahan, was arrested on 14 November 2021. He was detained in Behbahan prison and subsequently released on bail on 24 November 2021 until the investigation into his case is complete. According to information available to the undersigned organizations, the families of victims killed during the protests in Behbahan had planned to observe the second anniversary of their deaths at their gravesites but, in the days leading up to the protest anniversary, members of security and intelligence bodies summoned family members by telephone and forced them to give undertakings not to attend the memorial ceremonies or to inform media organizations about the summons'.

The Iranian authorities have also targeted human rights defenders who have called for accountability and shown solidarity with the families of those killed during the November 2019 protests. On 16 November 2021, human rights defender **Narges Mohammadi** was violently arrested while attending a memorial ceremony in the city of Karaj to mark the second anniversary of the death of Ebrahim Ketabdar. She was held for more than two months in solitary confinement in Section 209 of Tehran's Evin prison, which is under the control of the Ministry of Intelligence, before being transferred to Shahr-e Rey prison (also known as Gharchak), in the city of Varamin, Tehran province.¹⁰

The day after Narges Mohammadi's arrest, while she was held in solitary confinement, the authorities informed her that she has to serve a sentence of two years and six months which she

⁹ Mehr News Agency, «عناصر فعال در استمرار اغتشاش و کشته سازی بازداشت شدند», 24 December 2019, bit.ly/3qgess41

¹⁰ Frontline Defenders, "Narges Mohammadi transferred to Gharchak prison after two months of incommunicado", 21 January 2022, frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/narges-mohammadi-transferred-qarchak-prison-after-two-months-incommunicado

had received the previous month. They also threatened to carry out her flogging sentence of 80 lashes imminently. On 4 January 2022, while still in solitary confinement, she was taken before Branch 26 of the Revolutionary Court in Tehran to stand trial in a second case; the trial lasted just five minutes and she was denied access to a lawyer. Around mid-January 2022, she was informed that she had been sentenced to eight years and two months in prison; two years in internal “exile” in a city outside Tehran where she lives; a two-year ban on membership in political and social parties, groups or collectives; a two-year ban on engagement in online space, media and press; and 74 lashes in relation to this case. Her convictions and sentences are related to her peaceful human rights activism, including her participation in memorial ceremonies and other gatherings in solidarity with families of victims killed during the November 2019 protests. At the time of writing, she was on temporary medical leave following her transfer from prison to hospital for emergency heart surgery in mid-February 2022 for severely clogged arteries.

The Iranian authorities have also subjected other human rights defenders, including **Shahnaz Akmali** and **Maryam Karimbeigi**¹¹, to harassment for gathering in solidarity with families of victims killed during the November 2019 protests. **Mostafa Karimbeigi**, who was Shahnaz Akmali’s son and Maryam Karimbeigi’s brother, was killed during the post-election protests in 2009; since then, his mother and sister have faced years of harassment and intimidation, including through arbitrary arrests and detentions, for their own courageous campaigning to seek truth and justice for his death.

INTERNATIONAL ACTION NEEDED TO ADDRESS CRISIS OF IMPUNITY

More than two years on from the November 2019 killings, the Iranian authorities continue to cover-up the real death toll of those killed during the protests and deny and distort the truth about the circumstances surrounding the killings.

To date, no public official has been investigated, let alone held accountable, for ordering, committing or acquiescing to the grave human rights violations and crimes under international law committed during and in the aftermath of the protests.

Consistent with their pattern of denial and distortion, the Iranian authorities have described the Tribunal as an attack on and a conspiracy against Iran. State affiliated media ran multiple reports condemning the Tribunal, which featured quotes from political commentators, clerics and politicians calling the proceedings a “show trial”.¹² During a press briefing on 7 February 2022, Saeed Khatibzadeh, the spokesperson of Iran’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated¹³ that the Iranian authorities had expressed “serious protests” to the UK government about the proceedings and that the UK government and officials have “made London the focal point for actions against the Iranian nation and have paved the way for such poisonous spaces to exist”. He continued that the “behaviour” of the UK government is “irrational” and “unprecedented” and said that

¹¹ Frontline Defenders, “House raid and judicial harassment of woman human rights defender Maryam Karimbeigi”, 24 February 2022, frontlinedefenders.org/en/case/house-raid-and-judicial-harassment-woman-human-rights-defender-maryam-karimbeigi

¹² Khabar Online, «نماینده کاشمر هدف انگلیس از برپایی دادگاه نمایشی آبان ۹۸ را بر ملا کرد», 21 November 2021, bit.ly/3D58Lkp

¹³ Islamic Republic News Agency, «ایران منتظر تغییر رفتار آمریکایی‌ها و اروپایی‌ها به صورت عملی است», 7 February 2022, bit.ly/3JCUWvZ

“no responsible government would put such hostile behaviour on its agenda to prepare spaces for media outlets that are headed by terrorists and which conspire against the Iranian nation”.

The succession of atrocities in Iran is intractably linked to the systemic impunity enjoyed by Iranian officials, who believe they can continue to commit human rights violations without having to face repercussions.

Given the scale and gravity of the crimes under international law and human rights violations concerned and the absence of domestic avenues for justice, the undersigned organizations renew their calls on member states of the UN Human Rights Council to fulfill their responsibility to tackle impunity by establishing an investigative and accountability mechanism to collect, analyse and preserve evidence of the most serious crimes under international law committed in Iran to facilitate fair criminal proceedings in the future.

BACKGROUND

Protests erupted in Iran on 15 November 2019 over a sudden overnight increase in the price of fuel. The focus of the protests quickly expanded to broader grievances against the political establishment. Iran’s security forces responded swiftly to crush the protests, using live ammunition, birdshot, metal pellets, tear gas and water cannons against overwhelmingly peaceful protests. During five days of protests, security forces used unlawful lethal force, which led to the killing of hundreds of protesters and bystanders, including children. During and in the immediate aftermath of the protests, the authorities also arrested more than 7,000 men, women and children, and subjected hundreds of them to enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, and flagrant breaches of the right to a fair trial. During the protests, the authorities implemented a near-total internet shutdown¹⁴, restricting access to information to people inside Iran as well as preventing them from sharing information with the rest of the world, and hiding the scale of the violations committed.

SIGNATORIES:

All Human Rights for All in Iran

Amnesty International

Article 19

Association for the Human Rights of the Azerbaijani People in Iran (AHRAZ)

Association of Human Rights in Kurdistan of Iran-Geneva

Campaign to Free Political Prisoners in Iran (CFPPI)

Center for Human Rights in Iran

ECPM – Together against the death penalty

¹⁴ Amnesty International, *A Web of Impunity: The Killings Iran’s Internet Shutdown Hid*, [iran-shutdown.amnesty.org](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/IRN/10/000/20191115/)

Frontline Defenders

Hengaw Organization for Human Rights

Iran Human Rights

Justice for Iran

Kurdistan Human Rights Network

Siamak Pourzand Foundation (SPF)

The Baloch Activists Campaign